

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Case Study: CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates



THE BURNING QUESTION:

How can healthcare centers empower both providers and patients to think of themselves as system advocates, not just employees and consumers?

THE BACKGROUND:

For 25 years, the California Primary Care Association (CPCA) has promoted access to quality, affordable, and comprehensive healthcare services in communities across the state. As the representative of more than 1,300 nonprofit community health centers, CPCA provides its member health centers with information, tools, and resources needed to deliver high-quality health care services to patients across California—especially millions of low-income, uninsured, and underserved residents. CPCA members care for one in seven Californians, provide nearly 60,000 jobs, and generate a statewide economic impact of more than \$8 billion annually, including \$1.1 billion in total tax revenue.

Through its 501(c)4 organization CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates, CPCA also serves as an intellectual and advocacy partner for its member health centers and their leaders on issues related to healthcare reform and care delivery. CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates also leads local, state, and federal advocacy efforts to advance policies that strengthen the health care system, public health, and the healthcare safety net.

THE PROBLEM:

CPCA has successfully represented its member health centers for more than two decades since its founding and continues to be an influential force in the fight for California residents' access to affordable, quality healthcare. In recent years, numerous CPCA-backed assembly bills and budget recommendations moved from concept to implementation thanks to the hard work of CPCA, CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates, and their members' efforts.

However, despite the multibillion-dollar economic impact and considerable tax-producing efforts, CPCA and its health center members sometimes struggle to get their legislative initiatives over the finish line. This is due in no small part to the perception that it is unable to rally its main stakeholders—thousands of health care staff and providers and the nearly 7 million patients treated at their health centers—to respond at the polls. Sadly, the perception is currently reality. Health care providers and patients of CPCA's member health centers rarely identify as extended members of CPCA themselves. Instead, they simply consider themselves to be employed by, or patients of, their community health center. Patients first, patients only. This inability to turn providers and patients into advocates prevents CPCA, CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates, and its member health centers from truly flexing their significant political muscle.



THE SNYDER STRATEGY:

Snyder Strategies immediately recognized the untapped advocacy potential of CPCA member centers' providers and patients—but releasing this potential energy effectively would require careful planning, a clear focus on results, and a commitment from leaders at both CPCA and its many member organizations.

To develop the plan, Snyder Strategies examined external opportunities and barriers; conducted research on similar successful association models; assessed internal opportunities and barriers; conducted interviews with key internal stakeholders; and identified barriers to engagement and provided recommendations on how to overcome them.

We also reviewed existing advocacy systems, data, and metrics; identified data needed to create advocacy goals and benchmarks; and developed a plan to share this data across the expanded grassroots advocacy network. Using our research, we then developed a comprehensive, three-year strategy that outlines the advocacy staff, resources, and component investments necessary for success, and developed recommendations and milestones for key stakeholder engagement and full implementation.

TO THE POINT

- Helped create internal processes to operate in “campaign mode”
- Better aligned policy staff at health centers with state association government affairs staff
- Focused on collecting compelling data and reporting out to key audiences
- Created a pathway to target “activation” messages to patients and consumers
- Connected advocacy and fundraising processes to raise more money to support their political efforts

DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT

Over the past few years, California health centers identified the need to intentionally grow our political power in a coordinated way across the state. Nearly 7 million patients rely on us for their primary, mental health, and dental care, but we haven't had the tools or systems to engage them in our advocacy efforts.

Bethany created a three-year advocacy plan that gave us a clear roadmap for how to grow our network of advocates, allowing us to build power and ensure we can continue to provide care to those who need it most in communities throughout California.

Even more – Bethany's passion for grassroots advocacy is contagious, bringing joy to the work, and keeping us energized in moving towards our goal.

— LAURA SHECKLER

Former Director of Community Affairs, Community Clinic Consortium, and Co-Chair of CPCA's Consortia Policy Group

californiahealth⁺
advocates

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